

"... I was told that this negative had somehow become lost"

Canadian journalist Norman Similas was in Dallas attending a national convention of carbonated beverage bottlers; it was a trip he wouldn't soon forget. On the afternoon of November 21, he spoke with and photographed Vice-President Lyndon B. Johnson, who had addressed the convention. That night he visited the Carousel Club and spent more than an hour chatting with its hospitable owner, Jack Ruby. The following day Similas wandered down to Dealey Plaza to see and photograph the President of the United States.⁵²

Similas said he was standing on the south side of Elm St. and was less than ten feet from JFK's car at the time of the first shot. Writing in the now-defunct Canadian magazine *Liberty*, he recalled his actions during the assassination: "My camera had methodically returned to my cheek and I flipped the shutter. In retrospect, my actions were completely instinctive. Something inside me kept saying, 'Keep shooting those pictures. Whoever is shooting that gun is a sharpshooter. When he sees the flashes, he will know you are a photographer and he won't shoot you.'

"The Presidential limousine had passed me and slowed down slightly. My camera was directly angled toward the Texas School Book Depository in the background. The picture that I took on the curb of Elm Street was trained momentarily on an open, sixth-story window. The camera lens recorded what I could not possibly have seen at that moment—a rifle barrel extended over the windowsill. When the film was developed later, it showed two figures hovering over it."⁵³ (This, of course, is consistent with the Hughes film and the testimony of Carolyn Walther and Arnold Rowland.)

In a signed statement for the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Similas further described the picture:

"I arrived in Toronto at about 10 p.m., on November 23. Almost immediately on my arrival at home, I was contacted by a reporter from the Toronto Telegram who advised they received word from the Associated Press in Chicago that I had negatives that they might be interested in. He arrived at my home in five or ten minutes. I went over the story giving him an eyewitness account of what I had seen and heard during and following the assassination. He then examined the negatives, and while examining them he exclaimed, 'There looks like two people at this

window.' I then went over and looked at the negative and I agreed that there were two objects in the window on the 6th floor southeast corner of the building. This window differed from the others in that it had an alcove above the window as opposed to the others on the 5th and other floors, which had a square frame. The two objects appeared to be people and the Telegram reporter thought he saw what appeared to be a rifle barrel between them. I did not make any comment on this upon looking at it as it blended into the shadow of the object on the left."⁵⁴

But as fate would have it, the picture, like several others taken that day, was never to see the light of day.

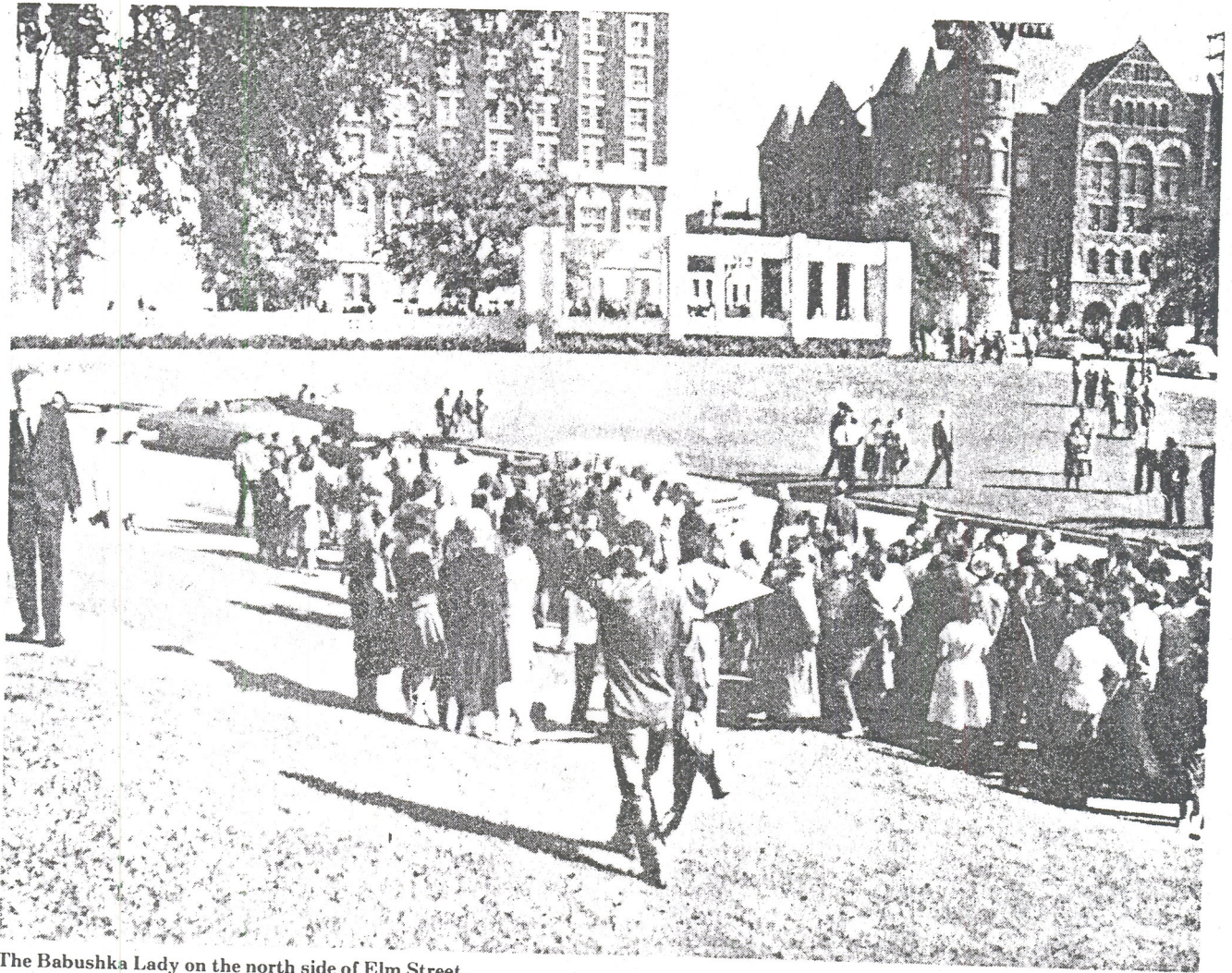
"Upon my return to Toronto I submitted my developed negatives to a daily newspaper (The Toronto Telegram). When they were not used on Monday, November 25, I phoned and asked that they be returned. Later I received a fat cheque in the mail, but the one negative which clearly showed what I believe to be two figures in the window of the assassin's nest was missing. When I pressed for it I was told that this negative had somehow become lost. It has never been returned to me."⁵⁵

The Babushka Lady: Her Film . . .

A piece of film probably of greater value than Abraham Zapruder's was taken by a woman known as "the Babushka Lady," so-called because in photographs and films of the assassination she can be seen wearing a babushka (a triangular head scarf). For years researchers wondered who this woman was; in 1970 the author learned her identity and interviewed her several times.

Standing on the south side of Elm Street (opposite Zapruder) and using a Super 8 Yashica movie camera with zoom lens, this woman filmed the entire assassination. Using a better camera, and much closer to the President, her view was not obstructed at a crucial moment by a road sign and her film would certainly have revealed the presence of gunmen on the knoll. Too, the unidentified Umbrella Man could be clearly seen, as could the face of the Depository building.

Unfortunately, the Babushka Lady nor anyone outside the government has ever seen her film; like Mary Moorman's photograph, it disappeared at the hands of federal authorities. It was confiscated from her by two men who identified themselves as agents of the F.B.I. (she has since



The Babushka Lady on the north side of Elm Street.



A blow-up of the Babuska Lady.



The Babushka Lady in 1962.



FBI agent Regis Kennedy

identified one of them as Regis Kennedy of the FBI) The agents approached her at her place of employment, the Colony Club, and asked for the film. She was told that they would process the film, view it and return it to her within ten days.⁵⁶ The film was *not* returned to her and she received no explanation. The government could not jeopardize its case against Oswald by letting *Life* or UPI obtain this valuable film. For obvious reasons it was confiscated by federal agents on November 23, before it could be processed and before its content could be revealed to the American public.

... and Her Story

This woman, then age 19, later married an important crime syndicate figure in the north Texas area, a man who could and did kill with impunity and was himself killed in a gangland-type slaying in west Texas in 1970.⁵⁷

The Babushka Lady told the author that in 1968, during the presidential campaign, she and her husband held a two-hour conversation with Richard M. Nixon in a Miami hotel.⁵⁸ At the time she related this story it seemed very strange that Candidate Nixon would spend two hours with someone other than a wealthy businessman who might give generously to the Nixon campaign coffer. It seemed even more odd that the former Vice President would meet with a known gangster. But in retrospect, after all that has been revealed about Nixon the Man during Watergate, that he would meet with a killer mobster seems in character. Nixon's ties to organized crime, directly and indirectly, are too extensive to cover here. The reader is referred to investigative reporter Jeff Gerth's articles published in *Penthouse* (July 1974) and *Sundance* (November 1972) magazines.

At this point we wish to digress from the Babushka Lady and her film, and elaborate on certain of Mr. Nixon's activities prior to the assassination of President Kennedy.

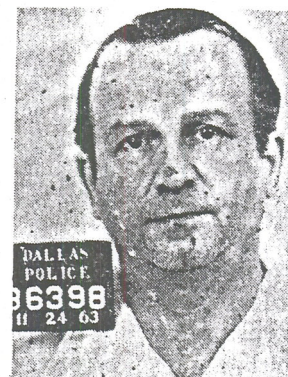
Richard Nixon and Jack Ruby: Birds of a Feather

In 1975 Trowbridge Ford, a professor of political science at Holy Cross University, discovered an FBI document which discloses that in 1947 Nixon intervened on behalf of a Chicago gangster who was about to be called as a witness before a congressional committee.

The memo, written by an FBI staff assistant, states, "It is my sworn statement that one Jack Rubenstein of Chicago, noted as a potential witness for hearings of the House Committee on Un-American Activities, is performing information functions for the staff of Congressman Richard



Richard Nixon



Jack Ruby

Nixon, Republican of California. It is requested Rubenstein not be called for open testimony in the aforementioned hearings."⁵⁹

That same year, Rubenstein moved to Dallas, Texas, and changed his name to Jack Ruby . . .⁶⁰

Nixon and the Assassination of President Remon.

Nixon is no stranger to assassination plots. As Vice-President he served as "Action Officer" (chairman) of a group known as Special Group 5412, working out of the White House to coordinate actions of the CIA and the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA).⁶¹ Under the protection of the National Security Council, this group plotted several assassination attempts on Fidel Castro and outlined what eventually became the Bay of Pigs invasion. Members of Special Group 5412 included Alexander Haig, the general who served as Nixon's White House Chief of Staff during the latter days of the Nixon presidency, and two CIA operatives: E. Howard Hunt and Frank Sturgis—both convicted in the break-in of Democratic Headquarters in the Watergate office complex.⁶²

Marion Cooper, a former CIA operative, has disclosed that on January 1, 1955, he attended a meeting in Honduras at which the planned assassination of President Jose Antonio Remon of Panama was discussed in detail. Among those present at the meeting were the team of men hired to kill the Panamanian leader, and the Vice President of the United States, Richard Nixon.⁶³ The following day Remon was machine-gunned to death at a racetrack outside Panama City.*

Cooper's statements have been validated by a polygraph examiner of the highest rating. Newsman Joe Pennington of Chicago says he has been able to verify most of the details of the

* Commission Document 279—"Assassination of Jose Remon, Panama"—remains classified in the National Archives.

A more damaging discrepancy, however, arises out of his excuse for being in Dallas—ostensibly to attend a board meeting of the Pepsi Cola Bottling Company, which Nixon's law firm represented.⁷¹ Researcher Richard Sprague has examined that company's corporate records and has found that no such board meeting was held in Dallas in November, 1963. . . .⁷²

Nixon's reason for being in Dallas suddenly becomes very suspect. It becomes even more so in light of his attendance at a gathering on the evening of November 21; this is discussed in Chapter 7.

Oswald and Ruby.

Returning to the Babushka Lady for a moment, she told the author that she was an acquaintance of Jack Ruby and frequented his nightclub, which was next door to the Colony Club where she worked. It was at Ruby's club that she was introduced by Ruby to "Lee Oswald of the CIA." She said Oswald frequently visited the Carousel, as did David Ferrie, who was there so often that she took him to be assistant manager of the club. Ferrie was a key figure in the investigation conducted by Jim Garrison (see chapter 4).

More than one person corroborated the Babushka Lady's report that Oswald had been in Ruby's establishment.

Two weeks after the assassination, Dallas attorney Carroll Jarnagin felt it his duty as a citizen to provide the FBI with important information. In a letter to J. Edgar Hoover, Jarnagin wrote: "On Oct. 4, 1963, I was in the Carousel Club in Dallas, Texas, and while there I heard Jack Ruby talking to a man using the name of H.L. Lee.* These men were talking about plans to kill the Governor of Texas. This information was passed on to the Texas Department of Public Safety on Oct. 5, 1963 by telephone. On Sunday, Nov. 24, 1963 I definitely realized that the picture in the Nov. 23, 1963 Dallas Times Herald of Lee Harvey Oswald was a picture of the man using the name of H.L. Lee, whose conversation with Jack Ruby I had overheard back on Oct. 4, 1963."⁷⁴

Jarnagin went on to describe in detail how Ruby reassured Oswald that he (Oswald) could shoot Connally from a window of the Carousel and easily escape out the back door. Oswald wanted half his payment for the chore in advance but Ruby

* As is customary for a man involved in the capacity of an informant for an intelligence or law enforcement agency, Oswald often used an alias. At his rooming house in Irving he used the name O. H. Lee.⁷³

told him he would receive it in one lump sum "after the job is done." Later in the conversation Ruby explained, "He (Connally) won't work with us on paroles. With a few of the right boys out we could really open up this state, with a little cooperation from the governor."⁷⁵

Jarnagin is a well-respected lawyer in the Dallas area; he is no crackpot. He had valuable information linking these two "lone nuts", yet he was not called to testify before the Commission.

One who did testify was William D. Crowe, Jr., who was questioned about a statement he made to newsmen concerning Oswald and Ruby. Using the stage name "Billy DeMar", Crowe was a stand-up comic and master of ceremonies at the Carousel Club.⁷⁶ On November 25, the day after Ruby carried out his order to execute patsy Oswald, Crowe remarked to reporters that he may have seen Oswald in the club shortly before the assassination.

He testified, ". . . the face seemed familiar as some faces do, and I had associated him (Oswald) with a patron that I had seen in the club a week before. They (newsmen) asked me in what—how I had seen him in the club, and I said I thought I had used him as one of the people that was—that I would use him in my memory bit." (Crowe used a routine involving mind association). He added, "Bill Willis, the drummer in the band at the club, said he seemed to remember Lee Harvey Oswald sitting on the front row on Thursday night right in the corner of the stage and the runway."⁷⁷



Kathy Kay with Ruby and Alice Alexander.

One of Ruby's strippers, Kathy Kay, told her co-workers at the Carousel that she had seen—and had, in fact, danced with—Oswald at the club a few days prior to the assassination.⁷⁸